Mr. Speaker, last week this body passed the National

Defense Authorization Act. In doing so, yet again, it put a stamp of

approval on a more violent, belligerent, and militaristic defense

policy.

While my friends in the majority continue to posture about Federal

spending, they are eager to authorize billions and billions on military

programs and policies that don't make America safer.

During last week's debate over the Defense bill, they voted down an

amendment that would have brought the Department of Defense funding

levels down to the same 2008 levels they want to impose on domestic

discretionary spending. Obviously, the Republicans believe in a blank

check for the Pentagon, but austerity for everyone else.

They rejected my amendment to eliminate the V-22 Osprey, a

multibillion-dollar aircraft with a performance and safety record so

shoddy that even Dick Cheney tried to eliminate it when he was

Secretary of Defense. They also rejected an amendment that would have

prohibited the use of funds for permanent bases in Iraq and

Afghanistan, despite the fact that an anonymous officer in Afghanistan

was quoted in yesterday's Washington Post as saying,

That officer added that supplemental

appropriations, with its billions of dollars for construction,

It gets worse, Mr. Speaker. The Defense bill includes a radically

expanded authorization for the use of military force. It completely

undermines the War Powers Act, empowering the President, whichever

President, whomever is in that office, to declare war regardless of

whether an attack against the United States is imminent, regardless of

whether our national security has been threatened. The language doesn't

even specify any geographic limitation.

The Republican majority couldn't even bring themselves to support an

amendment that called simply for a plan within 60 days to transfer

responsibility for Afghanistan's security to Afghanistan--a plan--so we

can begin the process of redevelopment. Just a plan within 60 days. As

our distinguished Democratic leader said here on the floor last week

when we were debating this, who could be against that?

Well, apparently the overwhelming majority of House Republicans could

be against it and are against it and voted against it. Then they topped

it off by voting to eliminate the modest public investment in the U.S.

Institute of Peace, an institute that carries out real, well-respected,

lifesaving work on peaceful conflict resolution around the world.

Last night the majority played a game of chicken with the global

financial credibility of the United States, holding a vote on the debt

ceiling that was designed to fail.

I challenge them: You want meaningful spending cuts as a condition

for a debt ceiling increase? Then stop giving the Pentagon unlimited

use of the taxpayers' ATM card. Stop putting the full faith and credit

of the United States on the line in order to wage more war.

You believe in fiscal discipline, and you think everything should be

on the table? Then let's talk about saving $10 billion a month by

ending the war in Afghanistan, and let's bring our troops home from

Iraq and Afghanistan.